

Western MRS Meeting Notes  
July 24, 2007  
St. Johns Episcopal Church, Asheville

Counties Present: Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Catawba, Cherokee, Cleveland, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Iredell, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania.

Introductions

News from Raleigh

Automation Update

MRS Institute

WF/CPS Collaboration

Sharing Info

Syncing CP/MRA

Joint Visits

Prevention

CFTs

Culture

News from Raleigh

- Evaluation Issues – Heather reiterated the DCD and Admin letter regarding Social Worker Visits with children. Any questions – contact Heather.
- Mentioned that MRS Institute flyer went out last week. Will try to have all counties there.

WF/CPS Collaboration

We are all in the same agency, but this seems to be hard. When Holly goes to counties and one side of the agency says they are doing ok, the other side of the agency feels that there is room for improvement. Just wanted to talk about why this might be difficult to do and how we can work around this.

Culture

How many people feel that there is a different culture with WF and CPS? What are things that people perceive – regardless if they are true.

- Some things Holly has noticed:
  - WF usually comes in and goes home at the same time, WF has more office work – some counties do very little home visits.
  - CPS has very varied hours, including lunch hours, is out of the office a lot, but frequently work after-hours. Those differences cause resentment
- Big pay difference.
- CPS is required to have a degree, cash maintenance was not.
- WF workers feel that they do social work as well, so why are they not treated (and paid) the same as CPS worker?
- Concern about privacy/confidentiality issues. County trying to overcome this. It IS ok to share information relevant to the case.
  - History – confidentiality was a big push in CPS and it was not encouraged to share information and it takes time to overcome that mindset.
  - Don't need to know size, shape, and number of bruises but WF needs to know if this is an issue with the family.

- The only thing CPS cannot share is who the reporter is.
- Need to share power, college degree or not, partners share power and everyone desires respect. This is not just for your families, but for your professional colleagues as well.
- Not being located together causes problems.
- WF is finding that some CPS workers realize that they (WF) know a lot about CPS clients, but it is a very slow process.
- The CFT meetings work better if everyone is at the table, the client sees this and it presents a united front to the family and also makes sure that all the expectations for the family are presented in one place.
- Question was asked if Child Support is included in CFT – people said yes.
- One county WF is concerned because they don't get notice of the CFTs until the day of or the day before. Often they can't make it at that point.
- Believe that cross training is important because it's hard to respect what you don't know and don't understand.
  - One county has different groups present at a very general level at staff meetings. Even the clerical staff comes to this so that they can get an understanding of what the different parts of the agency does.
- On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate?
  - 8, even have some sharing offices, 7, 8 feel that the turnover is actually beneficial because they made new staff learn both sides in the more cooperative MRS way and not the separate identity that "old school" mindset, 6, 8, 8, 8, 3. 9 get a daily list of common clients, email the worker and copy the supervisor as well, 8.5, 8, 6 working well together, but high turnover rate is causing a lag due to a learning curve. WF always checks with CPS when they get a new application for assistance to make sure there is no conflict with the two plans, 5, no conflict between the programs, just haven't bonded as well as they could – probably mostly due to the 50% turnover that they had in CPS last year – right now their CPS workers don't know their own co-workers in CPS, 6, 9

What are you doing that is helping collaboration?

- Buncombe has made several systemic changes. Employment services have been moved with CPS. The supervisor of employment used to be a CPS supervisor. All social work supervisors meet together, regardless of program area. Developed a joint MRA and Services Agreement for common cases, granted there are not too many of those, but when they do come up, the plans will not conflict. WF goes to CFT and CPS workers go to WF meetings. Also do joint home visits where appropriate. Gave all payee cases to the employment workers, since the payees are often underserved families and this may help the quality of services. All employment services workers have been to pre-service for child welfare workers.
- When you ask clients they will often not tell you if they are working with anyone else in the agency so WF always checks with CPS and vice versa.
- We may not have that many cases that are truly shared, but a lot of CPS families are not active in WF right this second, but maybe they were a few months ago, and may be again in a month or two, so there is still valuable knowledge to be shared.
- Having an open door.
- Some counties did a joint home visit if the family was already open in WF and then the CPS worker sat in on a WF application.

- WF application appointments take a long time and CPS workers should sit in on one of those to get an appreciation for what the WF worker does. There is a lot of assessment going on at those meetings.
- One county's daily list has been the single most helpful thing.
- Have to take the time to build relationships to save time in the long run and also provide better services to families.
- Buncombe has made a video that has an overview of the entire agency that all new Human Services employees see. This is just an overview and overwhelming at first, but it gives you a jumping off point, because at least they will have heard of the other program area.
  - Have to make sure that once the workers get their feet wet the little taste of the other program area that they got when they started is reinforced.
- It is nice when the emphasis on collaboration come from the top down, but sometimes it won't and if you can't change that you can only change your own behavior. You can make an effort to go meet someone on the other side and forge a personal connection that may spread to others when your co-workers in your program area see how it benefits you.
- Physical separation is a big issue. Often in different buildings in both large and smaller counties. Even if in the same building may be nowhere near each other and the barrier is more than a physical distance between the two.
- What can the state do to support this?
  - We have encouraged CPR and WF reps to work together; we have merged WF and CPS policy and automation, trying to bring training to WF folks.
  - If we knew what else would help, we could try to do it.
  - Note that there are some trainings that WF people can go to. One county sends their WF workers to the Facilitator training and they are facilitators now.
- This strategy gives the workers on each side the biggest bang for your buck. Allows workers to get support from each other, get a team feeling in your agency, and also saves them rediscovering information that is already known within your agency.
- It is powerful for the WF worker to say to the family "Well what is on your CPS plan, because I have to include it on your WF plan." It brings a whole new dimension to the client when they know that CPS and WF are aware of each other and what they are doing.

If the review team, or Duke came to your agency tomorrow, would they be able to tell that this work is getting done by looking at the records?

- Depends on which workers record you looked at.

How can we make these meetings more beneficial to the WF side?

- When we do the DV presentation, have the WF DV person come as well.
- If you have ideas for Holly, please share them with her.

Ideas for future meetings

- DV – Crystal Williams or Angela Holloway – policy and practice –
- Training – someone from staff development to talk about what trainings are required and let counties talk to them about their needs.
- Talked at this meeting last time about trying to have some attorneys here. Still planning to try and set this up, but this will take some doing!
- Issues concerning older youth.

## Future Meetings:

August: No Meetings due to the Institute

### Western:

Remainder of Western meetings at AB Tech

September - Friday 21<sup>st</sup>

October - Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup>

November - Friday 30<sup>th</sup>

### Central:

September - Guilford DSS 25<sup>th</sup>

October – Alamance Agricultural Ext. 17<sup>th</sup>

November – Rowan Co Library 27<sup>th</sup>

### Eastern:

September - New Hanover DSS 26<sup>th</sup>

October – Wilson Co DSS 25<sup>th</sup>

November – Hertford Co 28<sup>th</sup>